

24 April 1964

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Lt. General Joseph F. Carroll *Carroll*  
Director, Defense Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C. 20301

Dear Joe:

Thank you for your letter of 14 April which listed various questions concerning the CIA Roadwatch Program in Central Laos. I am glad that you have found useful the various briefings which have been given to you, the JCS, and Secretary McNamara on this subject. I understand that on 16 April  of my staff went over with you each one of the questions you posed in your letter and I trust you found this responsive to the points you raised.

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The answers to your questions as set forth below incorporate the views of our Chief of Station in Vientiane who was advised of your queries:

The CIA Roadwatch Program in Central Laos is almost exclusively an intelligence-gathering operation with a very limited harrassing capability. It has no harrassing mission at present.

We feel that the reporting system, and the operations and support of the Roadwatch teams are adequate for their mission as it is now defined. As you know, this program has been almost doubled in size since we obtained Presidential approval last June for augmenting this type of program in Laos; additional emphasis was placed on this program at a meeting between Secretary McNamara and Mr. McCone in Saigon last December. Some moderate further expansion is envisaged, and this expansion is proceeding on schedule. We question whether a substantial increase in the size of this program would be productive at this time because of severe limitations imposed by the requirement to recruit road-watchers who are natives of the areas in which they operate, limited

training facilities, and the fact that these teams operate deeply inside enemy-held territory.

The procedures and equipment employed in this program are being progressively refined.

We feel the Roadwatch teams do understand information requirements levied upon them, taking into consideration that most team members are relatively unsophisticated personnel. As you know, intelligence information on North Vietnamese military personnel using the routes through Laos and South Vietnam has been and continues to be a top priority requirement for these Roadwatch teams.

This program is tightly organized to give maximum support, on the most timely basis possible, to MACV. All intelligence from these Roadwatch teams is passed, upon receipt by CIA in Saigon, to MACV.

This program has been oriented primarily toward the collection of intelligence since the Geneva Accords on Laos. The program has been reoriented to give intensive coverage of infiltration groups into South Vietnam in the sense that policy approval was obtained last June to expand the program, and most of the expansion has been targeted toward the so-called corridor area. As I noted above, much additional emphasis has been placed on this program since last December. Our latest effort to meet this objective was the dispatch on 2 April of two additional Roadwatch teams [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As training of new recruits and retraining of existing intelligence cadres proceeds, we envisage progressively better coverage in this area and movement of teams further southward in the corridor.

Your offer of assistance from the Department of Defense is appreciated. Please be assured we will call upon you wherever we find this might assist the program.

Faithfully yours,

Marshall S. Carter  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Acting Director

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DDP/FE/[REDACTED]

Rewritten: O/DDCI:[REDACTED]

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Executive Registry

64-2986

22 April 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of Lieutenant General Joseph F. Carroll on  
HARDNOSE Operation in Central Laos

1. I briefed Lieutenant General Joseph F. Carroll, Director of DIA, on our [ ] Roadwatch Program from 11 A.M. to 1:15 P.M. on 16 April 1964. This briefing included origins, organization, communications, operations, and intelligence product of our [ ] Roadwatch teams, with emphasis on those operating in the Ho Chi Minh Corridor. General Carroll was given a detailed picture of how these teams procure their roadwatch intelligence, how it is transmitted [ ] and how it is disseminated to all the customers including MACV via CIA Saigon. General Carroll frequently returned to a main point: that he was not satisfied we were doing all we could to get all the intelligence there is to be obtained in this area. At the end of the briefing he seemed impressed with how far we had gone and what we had been able to accomplish under difficult operating circumstances. Policy limitations were raised only once, and then only indirectly.

2. General Carroll said that in an important respect the use to which our [ ] intelligence is being put is now undergoing a change. While previously an important intelligence objective in Central Laos was to detect and report the presence of Viet Cong and use this information on the political plane, we are now in a situation where MACV and South Vietnamese troops may need this information for tactical exploitation, and speed and close coordination were essential. I explained to General Carroll at some length how our system and procedures worked on this operation, adhering to our guideline that there need be no direct coordination or joint planning between [ ] MACV.

3. The only person present during this briefing in addition to General Carroll was [ ] of DIA, who told the General that the intelligence community had become

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much more interested in our Roadwatch reports in the past two months, and more credibility was being attached to them.

25X1 [redacted] and General Carroll are preparing a new  
25X1 briefing for Secretary McNamara on the intelligence product of our [redacted] Roadwatch teams, to be presented on 20 April.

4. General Carroll commented briefly on our roadwatch efforts in Northwest Laos and from the Meos; we have some roadwatch capability in both areas. The General also asked whether anyone such as MACV had a similar program in South Vietnam [redacted]

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5. I mentioned General Carroll's letter to the Director requesting more information on our Roadwatch teams on behalf of Secretary McNamara. I then produced a copy of the letter and General Carroll and I went over the questions raised in the letter, point by point. After we had concluded, I asked General Carroll whether he still wanted a written reply to his letter. He said yes, he understood we had sent his questions along [redacted] and he thought a written reply would be in order.

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[redacted] 25X1

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for Plans

SUBJECT: Letter to Lieutenant General Carroll  
on CIA Roadwatch Operations in  
Central Laos.

1. Attached herewith is a letter, which we recommend for your signature, to Lieutenant General Joseph F. Carroll, Director of DIA. This is in response to a letter to you from General Carroll dated 14 April 1964.

2. The letter which we propose for your signature responds to questions from General Carroll on our CIA Roadwatch intelligence program in Central Laos. It contains some comments on the procedures used in this program, and the support in the form of intelligence which it provides to MACV.

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Acting Chief, Far East Division

Attachment:  
Letter for Signature

cc: DDCI

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